

Chapter 2

Assessing and Developing a Device-Based Gunnery Training Strategy

This chapter discusses issues that the commander, S3, and master gunners should consider when establishing a gunnery program for their unit. The effectiveness of the gunnery training strategy will be a direct result of the amount of planning and effort placed into it during the assessment and development phase.

Assessing the Unit's Training Level

The first step the trainer should take in developing a training strategy is to assess the unit's current level of proficiency. This assessment should not be limited to gunnery-related tasks, but should consider all aspects of the unit's readiness status. Some of the areas that should be reviewed by the trainer are:

- Previous gunnery program strengths or weaknesses.
- Previous Tank Crew Gunnery Skills Test (TCGST) results or whether a diagnostic TCGST should be conducted.
- Age of equipment and current maintenance status.
- The unit's mission and its METL.
- Availability of training days.
- Availability of training areas.
- Availability of training devices.
- Whether training events can be combined to maximize training dollars.
- Crew stability within the unit (loss/gain of personnel).

Developing the Training Strategy

Once the unit's level of training has been determined, the trainer can start to develop his training strategy. At this point, the commander and trainer must work together to make sure the training strategy meets the needs of the unit, achieves the commander's goals and intent, and sustains unit proficiency.

SCHEDULING

Scheduling the training events will be the greatest challenge to developing the training strategy. Issues concerning scheduling will be mandated by the availability of training days, devices, and training sites. Some things the trainer can do to minimize scheduling problems are:

- Schedule early.
- Coordinate with supporting units.
- Develop contingencies for alternate training methods.
- Make sure training does not conflict with other unit commitments.
- Make sure enough time is allotted to complete the scheduled event.
- Maintain a logical training sequence.

The training developer should establish milestones within the training program to make sure the unit has reached the required level of training before progressing to the next training event. Scheduling, using milestones as the framework of the training program, will ensure that the unit has conducted all prerequisite training prior to live fire. Current gunnery training milestones mandated by Army doctrine are:

- Conduct Preparatory Tank Gunnery Training, per FM 17-12-1-2, Chapter 13, page 13-9.
- Record TCGST semi-annually.

- Conduct a gun tube recoil exercise and borescope semi-annually.
- Conduct Conduct-of-Fire Trainer (COFT) and Advanced Gunnery Training System (AGTS) training to achieve prerequisites to live fire.
- Conduct basic gunnery tables prior to intermediate gunnery tables.
- Conduct intermediate gunnery tables prior to advanced gunnery tables.
- Conduct advanced gunnery tables XI and XII annually.
- Conduct platoon field training exercises (FTX) quarterly.

Note. Combining training events, such as platoon FTXs and tactical tables, will maximize training days, sites, and operational tempo (OPTEMPO) available to the unit.

The use of training milestones will also help maintain the logical progression of training. It is recommended that the training cycle be divided into 90-day training periods. Alternating the emphasis of training from gunnery to maneuver will ensure that all combat-critical tasks are trained within the calendar year; however, those skills trained in the previous quarter must be sustained for this concept to be effective. The following is a sample training cycle for a unit:

- First quarter gunnery training emphasis, sustain maneuver skills.
- Second quarter maneuver training emphasis, sustain gunnery skills.
- Third quarter gunnery training emphasis, sustain maneuver skills.
- Fourth quarter maneuver training emphasis, sustain gunnery skills.

DEVICES

Once all training events have been scheduled, the training developer must determine which training devices best support the scheduled training. In a perfect world with unlimited resources, all training would be conducted on the actual system using live ammunition. As OPTEMPO decreases, unit trainers will need to maximize the available simulations and training devices available, to conduct as realistic training as possible.

Certain areas can currently only be trained in simulation, such as firing MPAT at a moving helicopter. If more than one device can support the scheduled training event, the trainer should choose which better supports training, and use the other system as a contingency should the preferred system become unavailable.

IMPLEMENTATION

Implementation of the unit training strategy at the beginning of a new gunnery training cycle will help ensure continuity in the gunnery training program. Ensuring that all scheduled events appear on the unit training schedule will help keep all members of the unit prepared for the upcoming training events.

It is imperative that the trainer delegate as much of the training as possible to qualified personnel to conduct the training event. If the primary trainer becomes totally involved in conducting the training, the program will suffer. The primary trainer should be the central hub from which training is scheduled and evaluated for effectiveness.

SUSTAIN

The training cycle should be continuous and change as the unit's mission and level of proficiency changes. Units that cease to train will experience a gradual loss of the skills learned previously.